



Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

The Beacon

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Office of Management
Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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bea-con (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

RON'S CORNER

Happy Holidays

by Ron Hicks
Deputy Administrator
Office of Management

During the next 30 days, the Federal Government will be officially celebrating Christmas and New Year's Day. During this period celebrated by many religious and cultural groups, I truly wish each and every one of you a safe and happy holiday season and hope you enjoy a prosperous 2001.

2000 *Beacon* Reader Survey Results

In the July issue of the *Beacon*, we published a survey that solicited your evaluation of the material published each month. The survey was an opportunity to influence the quantity and type of information you will see in this newsletter.

I want to thank each of the 187 respondents for taking the time to complete the survey and provide us with valuable information on our performance. Overall, respondents indicated that the *Beacon* is a useful tool for communicating news and information to FSIS employees and were satisfied with the content published each month.

Our analysis of the results indicates that the most useful sections of the *Beacon* include Human Resources, Workforce of the Future, and Supplies. Similarly, Human Resources, Workforce of the Future, and Ron's Corner continue to be most readers' favorite columns. Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that the length of the articles in the *Beacon* is appropriate, and almost 80 percent thought that the overall length is where it should be.

We received numerous suggestions for format changes and future articles. In the January issue, readers will find an index of articles during the past twelve months to aid you in locating information published during 2000. In addition, the electronic versions of the *Beacon* will be formatted for a single column so that the up-and-down scrolling required in reading a three-column newsletter is eliminated. We are currently considering other suggestions and will pass along additional changes as they are implemented.

The Office of Management is committed to providing quality service to FSIS employees and managers as you fulfill the Agency's food safety mission. We remain open to your comments and feedback on our performance. Your comments are invaluable to us as we strive to make the *Beacon* an even more useful tool for you. As our motto suggests, we hope you will continue to find this newsletter to be "a source of guidance" and a useful communications tool.

FSIS Establishes Special Award Plaque to Recognize Police Assistance to Enforcement And Inspection Personnel

*by Carol Seymour, Assistant Deputy Administrator
Office of Field Operations*

FSIS has established a special non-monetary award plaque to be used to recognize the assistance of state and local law enforcement officers who provide aid and protection to inspectors and compliance officers. The plaques are intended to recognize police officers that help FSIS personnel in dangerous, hostile or otherwise difficult situations.

After the shootings in California, we were reminded how important it is to have local police assistance to prevent violence or protect our employees when tensions are unusually high. DEO asked Compliance Officers to visit state and local police departments to give them flyers that explain what FSIS does and to ask for backup, in future situations that pose dangers of violence. Many reported that the police they contacted were unaware of our mission and the difficult situations food safety officers may encounter.

I was pleased to hear back from several parts of the country that, within weeks of these recent contacts with state or local police, several requests for assistance were promptly handled without incident. The best part is that these reports indicate the presence of police was properly requested and that the potential for violence was completely avoided. Employees need to know they can get the help they need and FSIS needs to promptly recognize the help when it's given.

The plaques to recognize local police assistance will be made available through a joint effort by DEO, the Administrative Services Division, and the Human Resources Division and will be available by early January. The citation on the plaque reads "For assisting the Food Safety and Inspection Service in the inspection and enforcement of food safety regulatory requirements" and is generic so it can be used to recognize differing forms of assistance to both inspection and enforcement personnel.

Supervisors and Managers in DEO and District Inspection Operations who wish to order the plaque to present to local law enforcement officials who provide assistance to FSIS, may order Item No. ENF-01 using FSIS Form 4451-9, Request for Recognition Items. Please include a brief justification statement and the name of the local police department or state official that you wish to have inscribed on the plaque. All request forms (Forms 4451-9) should be sent to the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch, HRD, Room 3817 South Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700 by mail or faxed to 202-720-7983.

If you have any questions on the new Non-Monetary award item, please contact Anna Pierce in PERB by e-mail to anna.pierce@usda.gov or telephone 202-720-6509.

HUMAN RESOURCES

How do I know if I meet the educational requirements for the Consumer Safety Officer series?

by Christine Sinclair

Over the last several months, many FSIS employees have asked this question. The long awaited process for determining if field employees meet the educational qualifications for the GS-696, Consumer Safety Officer (CSO) series has finally been implemented. Last month packets of information were mailed to Food Inspectors, Consumer Safety Inspectors, Compliance Officers, and all employees at the Technical Service Center and District Offices, other than those in professional positions, GS-11 and below, inviting them to take advantage of this new service.

Sending in this information is completely voluntary, however, field employees who are interested should submit the completed "information request sheet", along with any supporting educational documentation (if necessary), to the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO), Minneapolis by January 2, 2001.

The HRFO specialists will review your initial information and within 6-8 weeks you can expect a reply that will tell you one of three things:

- You now meet the educational requirements for the CSO;

- You don't meet the requirements at this time, however, with additional college-level coursework (in specific areas of study) you can meet the requirements, or
- We need additional information from you in order to make a clear determination.

At this time your experience is not being evaluated. Therefore, the HRFO specialist will not be able to tell you which grade level you qualify for, since that is determined by both experience and educational requirements.

HRFO will be keeping this information on the National Finance Center database, so it will be easy for them to update an employee's educational record as required coursework is completed.

This new service will help in a number of ways. It:

- gives employees important information for planning their professional development;
- helps the Agency determine the amount of money needed for an educational assistance program so it can reimburse employees for CSO courses; and
- pinpoints in what areas of the country we have current employees who meet the CSO requirements, and what are the numbers.

The last point is particularly important since only employees living within commuting distance of a particular position are eligible to compete for that position. Although no CSO positions are being advertised at this time, FSIS intends to advertise 50 to 100 Consumer Safety Officer positions from within the Agency during this fiscal year (FY 2001).

If you have questions please contact the specialist that services your District Office or site at 1-800-370-3747, ext. 2519.

Catch the Volunteer Spirit

President Clinton has often commended the many contributions Federal employees make to their communities through volunteer work. In an earlier Presidential memorandum, he discussed the importance of and encourages "citizen service" as an American tradition, where the "ethic of service must extend throughout a lifetime," not just be a temporary pursuit of a week or a month. He acknowledged that "over the years, great numbers of Federal employees have been generous with their time and talents and have made positive contributions to their local communities, even as they have fulfilled their official responsibilities." However, the President said there is a need for the Federal government to do more, as the Nation's largest employer, to strengthen our commitment to volunteerism.

We can do this by encouraging and supporting employees' volunteer activities, whenever possible. For many supervisors, this could mean using existing flexibilities of alternate work schedules, compensatory time, scheduling leave to accommodate volunteer activities or in some cases, granting limited excused absences to facilitate employee volunteer efforts. For example, this might be for such things as allowing employees to work for a couple of hours at a charity of their choice during the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) campaign, permitting employees to volunteer a portion of their time during the workweek to help out at the Agency "adopted" school or granting administrative leave for employees who donate blood to help restock their community blood-bank. For other supervisors, it may mean looking at ways to recognize the specific efforts of employees at their work location who do volunteer work so that others may observe and emulate the good works that can come from such endeavors.

To further the Government's commitment to volunteerism, the Office of Personnel Management encourages agencies to recognize employees who volunteer their skills to help others. Non-monetary awards are one way to single out the remarkable achievements of many of our employees who unselfishly contribute to our larger community. A plaque or letter of appreciation, a pen or a mug, or other inexpensive non-monetary award keepsake item that is valuable to the recipient who receives it, but is not valuable in and of itself, can go a long way in supporting an employee's volunteer contributions and encouraging others to Catch the Volunteer Spirit.

If you would like to know more about recognizing employees' volunteer activities with nonmonetary awards, call the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch on 202-720-7983. If you have questions regarding the use of flexible schedules or leave for volunteer activities, please contact the Classification and Compensation Branch, on 202-720-6287.

Changing Federal Income Tax Withholding*by Human Resources Field Office**Telephone: 800-370-3747*

Am I having too much federal income tax withheld, or not enough? If you want to make a change, you only need to complete a Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate. Once the form is complete, mail it directly to your Servicing Personnel Office, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, (field employees) or Washington, DC (headquarters employees). Don't wait until April 15 before you make a change. Changes can be made at anytime.

Good News

Public Law 106-346, signed by the President on October 23, 2000, rolls back CSRS and FERS withholdings for your Retirement contribution. Effective January 14, 2001, the start of pay period #1, CSRS employees will pay 7 % of their salary into the retirement fund. FERS and CSRS Offset employees will pay 0.8 %. This is an automatic payroll deduction, it will not affect your retirement benefit, and it will be reflected in the Leave and Earnings Statement you get the week of February 5, 2001.

If you make changes in your Health Insurance and/or your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) that will be effective on January 14th, make a note to check that Leave and Earning Statement for pay period 1 to assure these changes have taken place. Any discrepancies should be immediately called or e-mailed to your Human Resources Office.

Combined Federal Campaign

It is time again to call upon your help to support the 2001 Combined Federal Campaign in the National Capital Area (Metropolitan Washington, DC). The CFC is a government sanctioned event that enables employees, through their thoughtfulness and generosity, to contribute to charities of their choice from the more than 3,000 organizations in the CFC's Catalog of Caring. A few minutes of your time to consider donating to a charity of your choice could mean meals for hungry children, relief for families in need of counseling, further work on cures for diseases, comfort for the dying, environmental protection, and better lives for millions of people in our greater community.

This year's CFC is already in progress and will extend through December. Employees in Headquarters will be contacted by their CFC Keyworker and given the Catalog of Caring and a pledge card. (Field employees in large metropolitan areas should consider giving to the CFC in their local area when that Campaign is announced). Last year, FSIS met 100% of its goal and we are counting on employees in Headquarters again this year. You can make a difference. Help renew the hope of so many by contributing in an area of interest to you. Please take the time to look through the catalog and see the various organizations that are seeking your help. Remember that a payroll deduction makes it convenient for you to give by letting you spread your contribution across the entire year. The season of giving is upon us. Whatever you can do to help those less fortunate will be appreciated.

No Excuse for Abuse*by Beatriz Planas**Human Resources Division**Telephone: 202-720-7983*

Did you know that every 15 seconds somewhere in the United States a woman is a victim of domestic violence? Did you know that this is the most common, but least reported crime in the United States?

Domestic violence is the use of force by one person to control the other. You or someone you know may be a victim and may not be aware of it. The American Medical Association estimates that over 4 million women are victims of severe assault by boyfriends and husbands each year.

Who are the abusers? Insecure, jealous men/women, who have an explosive temper, overprotect their partners and are in desperate need of control. They often criticize and put down their partners a lot; in most cases, they drink heavily and do not take responsibility for their actions.

Who are the victims? Men and women of all ages, cultures, races, occupations, and income levels. Although men are victims of domestic violence too, in 90% of the reported cases, the victim is a woman.

It is important to know that there are different forms of abuse. Whether it is verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual, be aware that it is abuse and there is no excuse or reason for it. Sometimes it is very hard for victims of domestic violence to recognize when they are involved in abusive situations. In most cases, emotional and financial limitations prohibit them from leaving the abuser. Even more, research reveals that abuse can increase and is worst when the victim tries to end the relationship. Therefore, it is critical to offer support for victims who opt to leave abusive situations.

It is important to understand that no one deserves to be abused, it is not the victims' fault, and there is something YOU can do to help. If you or someone you know are victims of domestic violence, please ask for help. You can call your Employee Assistance Program, 24 hours a day at 1-800-523-5668/ TDD 1-800-822-7610. And remember this service is confidential and there is no charge to Agency employees. Also, if you need additional information or help, you can contact the National Domestic Violence hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) / TDD 1-800-787-3224. But most of all, if you are in an emergency situation, where you are on the receiving end of the abuse, please dial 911 first to get immediate aid.

Also, listed below are web addresses of centers and agencies that may also be useful to you:

Violence Against Women Office (VAWO)

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>

Help in the USA

[http://www.dvsheltertour.org/
helpusa.html](http://www.dvsheltertour.org/helpusa.html)

Office of Personnel Management

"Responding to Domestic Violence, Where Federal Employees can find Help"

[http://www.opm.gov/ehs/workplac/
html/domestic.html](http://www.opm.gov/ehs/workplac/html/domestic.html)

Domestic Violence Handbook

<http://www.domesticviolence.org>

*NOTE: The foregoing article was compiled from the following sources should you require additional information:

<http://www.famvi.com>

<http://www.domesticviolence.org>

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo>

Statistics:

[http://www.actabuse.com/
dvstats_2.html](http://www.actabuse.com/dvstats_2.html)

Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics

Microcomputer Learning Center

by Salina Barton

Human Resources Division

Telephone: 202-720-4937

Would you like to become skilled at PowerPoint, Excel, or even Access? What about being among the first to take our courses offered first in HTML, Web Search, and JavaScript? Once again, the Microcomputer Learning Center will be back in business with classes starting in January 2001. This year, you can let your voice be heard and let us know about any courses you wish to take by special request.

You will be able to save time by giving your fax machine a rest and taking advantage of on-line registration through our website at

[http:// hrd.fsis.usda.gov/mclc](http://hrd.fsis.usda.gov/mclc). As an added incentive, you can obtain schedules and course descriptions on the classes provided without the burden of interrupting your already hectic schedule.

All of the classes will be conducted in the Microcomputer Learning Center, which is conveniently located in Room 3148 in the South Building, Washington, DC.

Secretary's Advisory Committee for Employees with Disabilities (SACED)

The goal of the SACED is to enable USDA to achieve equitable, consistent, Department-wide policies and reasonable accommodations where employees with disabilities are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and to establish USDA as an employer of choice. Dr. Bonnie Buntain, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Office of Public Health and Science, is currently representing FSIS on this important Committee.

You can learn more about SACED at the following Internet website:

<http://www.SACED.usda.gov>

October/November Retirements

George A. Amsden, FI, OFO, Wallula, WA, 11/3/00, 24 years
Jose L. Baerga, CSI, OFO, Cidra, PR, 11/3/00, 30 years
Chang J. Choi, SVMO, OFO, South Bend, IN, 10/31/00, 16 years
Johnny V. Collins, CSI, OFO, Lubbock, TX, 11/1/00, 34 years
Sharon L. Disheroon, FI, OFO, Green Forest, AR, 10/21/00, 16 years
David John Gonner, FI, OFO, Dubuque, IA, 10/31/00, 18 years
Alejandro A. Gonzalez, SVMO, OFO, Corpus Christi, TX, 9/23/00, 27 years
Carla D. Goodwin, FI, OFO, Trussville, AL, 9/9/00, 5 years
Stephen V. Guryca, SVMO, OFO, Traverse City, MI, 10/27/00, 22 years
Edward T. Harrison, CSI, OFO, Defuniak Springs, FL, 10/20/00, 35 years
William J. Helms, CSI, OFO, Ft. Morgan, CO, 11/4/00, 22 years
Clifford B. Hernandez, FI, OFO, New Orleans, LA, 11/3/00, 29 years
Samuel Hunter, FI, OFO, Accomac, VA, 10/21/00, 4 years
Arthur J. Mund, FI, OFO, Mount Pleasant, TX, 10/19/00, 9 years
John J. O'Connor, CSI, OFO, New Castle, PA, 11/3/00, 30 years
Willard L. Peahi, CSI, OFO, Honolulu, HI, 11/4/00, 4 years
Mae C. Potter, FI, OFO, Wilkesboro, NC, 10/21/00, 10 years
Esther Reed, OAC, Alameda, CA, 11/4/00, 12 years
Florante R. Rellosa, SVMO, OFO, Vineland, NJ, 11/3/00, 30 years
Jack C. Richason, FI, OFO, Logansport, IN, 10/21/00, 16 years
Lydia G. Scurlock, OM, Washington, DC, 10/23/00, 36 years
Bernard C. Shooner, Compliance, Hartford, CT, 11/17/00, 27 years
Joyce K. Simmons, ERS, Dallas, TX, 11/3/00, 42 years
Dora E. Smith, FI, OFO, Berryville, AR, 11/3/00, 28 years
Judith N. Terry, FI, OFO, Decatur, AL, 10/21/00, 10 years

Deaths-In-Service

Mr. Roy D. Ward, Jr., FI, OFO, Beardstown, IL, 10/28/00
Mr. Gerald L. Johnson, SVMO, OFO, Guymon, OK, 11/12/00

Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Jackie Copeland
OFO, DC; Illness
 2. Annie Stewart
POB, MN; Serious Illness
 3. Linda Cole
OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness
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4. Stephanie Showell
OFO, DE; Family Illness
5. Linda Carey
EMS, DC; Surgery
6. Betty Morgan
OFO, AR; Family Illness
7. Carolyn Woolfolk
OFO, DC; Surgery
8. OFO-99-0027*
OFO, NC, Surgery
9. Tammy Love
OFO, AR; Surgery
10. Sue Engels
OFO, IA; Family Illness
11. Aurbrey Tribble
OFO, FL; Serious Illness
12. Jacqueline Bonner
OFO, AL; Surgery
13. John French
OFO, GA; Family Illness
14. Clement Grangier
OFO, MD; Serious Illness
15. OFO-99-0047*
OFO, IA; Surgery
16. Mark Spear
OFO, AL; Surgery
17. James Layman
OFO, OH; Serious Illness
18. Karen Wesson
OFO, DC; Surgery
19. Brandy Blevins
OFO, CA; Serious Illness
20. Vandora Hampton
OFO, VA; Serious Illness
21. OFO-00-0006 *
OFO, AL, Illness
22. Randy Haggard
OFO, TX; Serious illness
23. Robert Butler
OFO, MS; Surgery
24. Ralph Bowen
OFO, NE; Serious Illness
25. Deana Hall
OFO, AR; Maternity
26. Frankie Beacorn
FO-OO-0020
27. OFO-00-0022*
OFO, MI; Serious Illness
28. Earnestine Smitherman
OFO, TX; Surgery
29. Cynthia Sherman
OFO, DC; Serious Illness
30. Thomas Gorka
OFO, IL; Serious Illness
31. Eusebio Galindo
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
32. Denise Barnes
OFO, DC; Surgery

33. Luan Hamar
OFO, CA; Surgery
34. Becky Schneider
OFO, CO; Illness
35. OFO-00-0030*
OFO, WV; Surgery
36. Nancy Clyburn
OPHS-DC-Surgery
37. OFO-00-0034*
OFO, NJ; Surgery
38. Jerry Castleberry
OFO, GA; Surgery
39. Beverly Winston
OFO, GA; Maternity
40. OFO-00-0036*
OFO, SC; Surgery
41. Barbara Males
OFO, NY; Serious Illness
42. Donald Palmer
OFO, KS; Family Illness
43. OFO-00- 0042*
OFO, AL; Surgery
44. Leslie Buzzell
OFO, ME; Surgery
45. Stephanie Kane
OPPDE, DC; Surgery
46. Lula Wallace
OPPDE, DC; Maternity
47. Margarita Fiol
OFO, PR; Illness
48. Michelle Furchak
OM, DC; Family Illness
49. Lois Mullens
OFO, AL; Serious Illness
50. Mary Ann Riley
OPPDE, DC; Family Illness
51. Dolores Bradley-Vargas
OFO, GA; Serious Illness
52. Janet O'Byrne
OFO, MN; Serious Illness
53. George Toups
OFO, LA; Serious Illness

*While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for HQ employees on 202-720-6287.

BUDGET

FSIS's FY 2001 Appropriation*by Dan Metzler**Telephone: 202-720-4162**Bob Tuverson**Telephone: 202-720-4432**Budget Division*

On Saturday, October 28, 2000, the President signed the FY 2001 Agriculture appropriations bill into law. As mentioned in last month's issue of the *Beacon*, USDA's FY 2001 appropriations act provides \$696,704,000 for FSIS, an increase of \$47,585,000 over the \$649,119,000 appropriated for FY 2000, and an increase of \$8,500,000 over the \$688,204,000 requested in the President's Budget for FY 2001.

The appropriation fully funds what are considered the Agency's mandatory increases for FY 2001. FSIS often has received less than the full amount requested for mandatory increases, requiring cost reductions in other areas. The \$696,704,000 appropriated for FSIS includes full funding for inplant staffing at current levels and for the Agency's additional payroll expenditures resulting from increases in the cost of living and health / retirement benefits costs in FY 2001. Additional funding is also provided for cost increases associated with maintaining the Federal share of State inspection program operations of \$1,079,000.

The FY 2001 appropriation provides for new initiatives to better ensure the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products. As an example, FSIS's portion of the President's Food Safety Initiative, fully funded in FY 2001, includes \$1,545,000 to expand the Agency's risk evaluation and management capabilities, \$3,764,000 to increase collaboration with state and local food safety authorities and conduct an outreach program to industry and consumers, and \$2,000,000 to perform FSIS's responsibilities under the "Egg Safety Action Plan" developed by the President's Council of Food Safety. As mentioned in one of the President's Saturday radio addresses this past summer, FSIS will be cooperating with both the Food and Drug Administration and the Agricultural Marketing Service in executing an enhanced shell egg surveillance program.

Additional funding is provided for verification of the HACCP equivalency of state and foreign government inspection systems, to increase U.S. exporters access to foreign markets and to encourage the adoption of science-based food safety standards by foreign governments. FSIS's work with foreign governments will be accomplished principally through enhanced U.S. participation and leadership in the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Other major provisions of the Act that affect FSIS are.

- FSIS's funding includes \$6,000,000 to pay bills incurred in previous years that the Agency has been unable to pay due to prior years spending restrictions.
- By March 1, 2001 FSIS must submit a report on the current status meat and poultry inspection regulations in place prior to publication of the Pathogen Reduction HACCP Rule.
- Effective 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Act (i.e. April 28, 2001) establishments in the United States that slaughter or process birds such as ostriches, emus, rheas, and squab shall be subject to the ante mortem and post mortem inspection, reinspection, and sanitation requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 451 et seq.) rather than the voluntary poultry inspection program. The Act provides \$2,500,000 for this purpose.

FSIS is also considering other funding needs not included in the appropriation such as recommendations from the Workforce Violence and Veterinarian of the Future Task Force reports. Decisions on these, as well as other unfunded initiatives, are pending.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

New FSIS Safety and Health Poster

by Tom Wright

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4246

During December, we are distributing to the Senior FSIS Official In Charge of each Field Operations' workplace the newly designed FSIS Occupational Safety and Health Poster. It is an OSHA requirement that an informational poster be posted at each workplace. This poster replaces the Form AD-1010, USDA Occupational Safety and Health Poster. The new poster provides the name and contact information of the Field Safety and Occupational Health Specialist responsible for your work location. If revisions are required, we will redistribute updated copies to your workplace. If you don't receive a new poster by December 31, 2000, please contact the specialist for your workplace. A laminated version of the poster and a larger version of the poster will also be available from the specialist. Contact your District Office or me at the above telephone number or e-mail if you do not know the name of specialist for your workplace. Distribution of the new poster to other FSIS locations will occur in the near future.

Hazard Reporting Forms

Q: Most FSIS employees work in meat, poultry, or egg product plants. When an employee reports a hazard, why isn't there a copy of FSIS Form 4791-27, Report of Alleged Safety or Health Hazard available submit to plant management for their response?

A: FSIS is responsible for the safety and health of FSIS employees. The plant does not cause all-unsafe or unhealthful working conditions, such as unsafe acts by FSIS employees. However, if the plant is or may be responsible for the hazard, then the supervisor IIC should make a copy of Form 4791-27 and present it to plant management. The plant's written response should be included in the response to the complainant. If the plant's response is not satisfactory, then the supervisor or IIC will need to engage in further dialog with the plant. The supervisor or IIC should use any and all reasonable avenues to address the safety and health of FSIS employees.

TRAINING

Improvements In CEDL Customer Service

by Krystal Thorn

Office of Field Operations, Human Resources Development Staff

Telephone: 979-260-9562

As of October 1, 2000, the Technical Services Center (TSC) has implemented several changes in its Continuing Education and Distance Learning Center (CEDL) to streamline processes and better serve employees. The CEDL at College Station serves as a key reference library for Agency personnel.

Better customer service. CEDL staff are now able to answer employee inquiries in a more timely manner. In addition to the telephone number (800/336-3747), the CEDL has also established a new direct e-mail address for requests and inquiries. It is cedl@usda.gov. Check us out!

At any given time, the staff can now call up a particular item to see if it is available for check-out. If the item is not available, we can determine who has the item, when it was checked out, when it is due back, or if it is past due. We can also prepare various usage reports by item, district, course, and other characteristics.

The work behind better customer service. The CEDL staff used a combination of old-fashioned detective work and new technology to improve its processes.

First, we updated all records by contacting users about the status of their courses (in-progress or completed) and overdue materials, and completely reorganized our filing systems.

To accurately track use of CEDL materials, we have incorporated a master tracking system using bar code technology. This is used to effectively and efficiently check items in and out of the audio/visual/CD lending library and it is also used to track self-study course materials. This inventory control system allows us to scan bar code labels attached to the book, video, or other item. The system reads the item's name and number, then assigns that copy to the user/student who is next on the request list.

CEDL is looking at the big picture. In addition, all CEDL records are being merged with the Training Center records into a master database so that we can more efficiently track each student's *complete* training records.

CEDL is looking for a new coordinator. Robert Burke, the former coordinator of the Continuing Education and Distance Learning Center, retired on July 5, 2000. An announcement for a new coordinator closed October 23. The new coordinator will take over the Certificate of Excellence Program, perform course evaluations, and maintain and distribute new CEDL Catalogs. The CEDL program is evaluating new and updated materials and, with funding, will make them available to the workforce.

Beth Leopold contributed to this article.

VDIP

Making Conciliatory Gestures

by Kathy Welsh

Telephone: 202-720-5657

Milo Christianson

Telephone: 612-370-2000

Labor and Employee Relations Division

In the October 2000 issue of the *Beacon*, we described how conflicts escalate in intensity, evolving through a relatively predictable sequence of events. Conflicts generally begin in a small way, often with the development of intense feeling between the people involved. The sequence continues with the gradual hardening of positions, a process of dehumanization that breeds mistrust, a desire to punish the other person or persons, and finally, a deterioration or breakdown in the ability to communicate.

Many of the disputes we mediate under the Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program are deep, long standing, and very destructive. Effective communication has often ceased, and the parties may have even forgotten what it was that caused their conflict in the first place. Resolving such conflicts can be difficult. In many cases, resolution requires that at least one of the people involved make a first move – a move that mediators call a “conciliatory gesture.” The objective of a conciliatory gesture is to move beyond the destructive status quo to a point where communication can be resumed and effective solutions explored. There are many ways to make a conciliatory gesture. They include such things as apologizing, expressing regret, offering a compromise, expressing empathy, revealing one’s own underlying needs and emotional issues, and asking for honest feedback.

Stepping forward to make a conciliatory gesture is not easy. It requires one to move out of his or her comfort zone – to take a risk. After all, we don’t know how the other person will react to this gesture, and we therefore feel vulnerable. As uncomfortable as conflict is, remaining in one can often feel more comfortable than taking this first step toward resolution. But making a conciliatory gesture can have an amazing effect on a relationship. It can give people who have been locked in conflict for a long time, an opportunity to finally look for real solutions to their problems.

This is a season when we celebrate, in many different ways, the possibilities of peace. That’s what mediation and conflict resolution are all about – peace-making. And what is true among nations is true also for individuals – the road to peace often begins with a small, yet significant, gesture of conciliation. Happy (and Peaceful) Holidays to Everyone!

SUPPLIES

Move Update*by Pete Bridgeman**Administrative Services Division**Telephone: 3001-504-4222*

The move to the new warehouse in Beltsville has been delayed, due to some permit and inspection delays. They are currently shooting for a Dec. 10th move date, but it could possibly be delayed until after the holidays. Orders sent to either address will get where they need to go and be filled. You should expect a little longer turn-around time on most orders placed over the next month or two while we are in transition and getting settled into the new facility, but once the dust settles, service should be better than ever at the Beltsville Facility. The address of the new facility will be:

USDA, FSIS FIELD SUPPLY CENTER (FSC)
11711 Maryland Ave. East
Beltsville, MD 20705

We'll hold off on issuing the revised catalog until the move has been completed, and a number of new items that are pending are in stock, so these can be included in the catalog. At this point, it looks like a distribution towards the end of January is most likely.

Export Stamp Problems

We have had a lot of reports of problems with the most recent batch of Dormy Export Stamps. The most common problem seems to be with the latch breaking, but there have also been reports of the hinge pin falling out, the top of the handle coming off, and the glue holding the rubber face of the stamp in place coming undone. If you have experienced any of these problems with the Dormy stamps in the past 3 or 4 months, and still have the broken stamps available, please send these stamps to the following address:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, PPS
5601 Sunnyside Ave - 2L-197
Beltsville, MD 20705-5230

The vendor that we purchase these from has agreed to repair those stamps that have had these problems, where possible.

We recently received a new batch of Dormy Stamps into Landover, which we hope will not have these same problems. However, if you do experience these problems, please send them to the address indicated, and we will have them repaired.

Apron Problems

We've also received a lot of complaints about the Enviroguard brand of the Blue Poultry Slaughter Aprons. We have discontinued purchase of this brand, and gone back to the Ansell-Edmont brand. We hope you will find these to be more consistent with the quality that came to be expected of these aprons since we started using the Ansell-Edmont brand several years ago. We apologize for the problems experienced with the Enviroguard, or other replacement brands, of this apron. We have to have a very powerful justification to warrant "Brand Name Specification" when we procure, in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), so we do not unnecessarily limit competition. However, with the aprons, we will now specify the brand that has proven to be most effective, with ample justification.

ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances*by Corinne Calhoun**Administrative Services Division**Telephone: 301-504-4233*

The following notices and directives have been issued since the November 2000 edition of *The Beacon*. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 42-00 (10/26/00)

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season, November 15, 2000, through January 31, 2001

Notice 43-00 (10/26/00)

Meat and Poultry Food Chemistry Samples

Notice 44-00 (10/31/00)

Leptospirosis Safety Precautions

Notice 45-00 (11/2/00)

Travel Services for Additional Field Locations

Notice 46-00 (11/6/00)

Charging Leave During Hazardous Weather

Notice 47-00 (11/7/00)

Nominations for USDA's Honor Awards – Year 2001

Notice 48-00 (11/13/00)

Special Provisions for the End of the Leave Year

Notice 49-00 (11/14/00)

Restoration of Forfeited Annual Leave

Notice 50-00 (11/14/00)

Federal Holidays in 2001

Directive 4300.6 (10/26/00)

Temporary Promotions and Details

Directive 4791.1, Revision 2, Amendment 1 (11/14/00)

Basic Occupational Safety and Health Program

Directive 4791.6, Revision 2, (11/9/00)

Procedures for Workplace and Travel Emergencies

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA FSIS ASD PMS

MAILDROP 5241

5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE

BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241

Telephone: 301-504-4242

Fax: 301-504-4277

FACILITIES

Financial Management Division Moves

by Michael O'Donnell

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-3990

The Office of Management's Financial Management Division (FMD) recently moved from the South Building in Washington, DC to the USDA's George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, MD. FMD joins OM's Administrative Services Division and Civil Rights Division in Beltsville, where the FSIS Beltsville District Office is also located. FSIS now has almost 100 employees stationed at the Carver Center. The move was necessitated by the ongoing renovations at the South Building, which has caused several FSIS headquarters staffs to relocate.

FMD can be contacted at:

USDA FSIS FMD

[Maildrop #]

5601 Sunnyside Avenue

Beltsville, MD 20705

Office of the Division Director

Telephone: 301-504-5885

Maildrop: 5262

Financial Review and Analysis Branch

Telephone: 301-504-5887

Maildrop 5264

Financial Systems and Accounting Branch

Telephone: 301-504-5898

Maildrop 5263

An FSIS Notice will be issued with all of the Division's new telephone and mail information.

To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please contact:

Kevin Dressman

Editor, *The Beacon*

USDA, FSIS, OM

Mail Drop 5250

5601 Sunnyside Avenue

Beltsville, MD 20705-5250

Tel: 301-504-4247

Fax: 301-504-4275

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically in the "Newsletters" public folder on the Exchange (Outlook) mail system as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

Thrift Savings Plan
C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns
November 8, 2000

Months	C Fund	S&P 500 Stock Index	F Fund	Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	G Fund
1995 (Jan. - Dec.)	37.41%	37.58%	18.31%	18.47%	7.03%
1996 (Jan. - Dec.)	22.85%	22.96%	3.66%	3.63%	6.76%
1997 (Jan. - Dec.)	33.17%	33.36%	9.60%	9.65%	6.77%
1998 (Jan. - Dec.)	28.44%	28.58%	8.70%	8.69%	5.74%
1999 (Jan. - Dec.)	20.95%	21.04%	(0.85%)	(0.82%)	5.99%
1999	%	%	%	%	%
November	2.00	2.03	(0.01)	(0.01)	.51
December	5.90	5.89	(0.45)	(0.48)	.54
2000					
January	(5.03)	(5.02)	(0.34)	(0.33)	.56
February	(1.93)	(1.89)	1.22	1.21	.53
March	9.74	9.78	1.32	1.32	.55
April	(2.98)	(3.01)	(0.29)	(0.29)	.52
May	(2.05)	(2.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	.54
June	2.44	2.47	2.07	2.08	.53
July	(1.56)	(1.56)	0.89	0.91	.53
August	6.19	6.21	1.46	.145	.52
September	(5.27)	(5.28)	.64	.63	.49
October	(0.40)	(0.42)	.66	.66	.51
Last 12 Months *	6.01	6.09	7.36	7.30	6.51

Percentages in () are negative.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund, which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund, which tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month.

* The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The C and F Fund returns vary from the index returns because of C and F Fund expenses, changing balances in the C and F Funds, and differences in returns between the Barclays funds and the underlying indexes. The index returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period.

Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.